

391
The Mischief of Rash and Un-
charitable Judging,

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A

S E R M O N

Preach'd at

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SEPT. II. 1718,

AT THE

Young-Men's Lecture.

By ISAAC GILLING.

*Publish'd at the earnest Desire of some, and as a ne-
cessary Vindication against the importunate Cla-
mors of others.*

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SERMON

BY



JOHN MONTAGU

ESQ.

OF

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LONDON



T H E
P R E F A C E.

THIS Sermon was deliver'd in EXON, at the Thursday's Lecture, before many Ministers, who met there the Tuesday and Wednesday, for MUTUAL ADVICE. A most fearful Outcry was made against Mr. HUDDY, who preach'd the Day before, and myself, as if we went about to sap the very Foundations of Christianity. As Mr. HUDDY was, so I am, in a manner constrain'd to publish my Discourse, for my own Vindication. And the very kind Reception his Performance hath met with by the sensible Part of the World (who are at a Loss to find out what should afford Matter for Censure) makes me promise my self, that all competent Judges, into whose Hands mine shall fall, will acknowledge that I have given no just Cause of Offence. To oppose Censoriousness, one of the most pernicious Vices of the

P R E F A C E.

Times, needs no Apology, and can offend none but the Guilty. To assert the great Principles of the Reformation, The Right of all Christians to stick to the BIBLE as the Rule of Faith, and to judge for themselves in Matters of Religion, according to the Scripture, appears to me a Thing of great Importance. These Doctrines I am persuaded are of God, and, I hope, will spread, in spite of all the Efforts of Blind and Furious Bigotry; especially now my Ld. Bp. of BANGOR hath set them in so clear a Light: whose noble Attempt to rescue the Bodies and Souls of Men from the mischievous Effects of narrow and slavish Principles, merits another sort of Treatment than that very Great and Good Man hath met with from too many, in this ungrateful Age.

I HAVE added some Inlargements which were not deliver'd in the Pulpit, for Want of Time; and a very few Quotations, to shew that I am not Singular.

I SEE no need for me to beg the Favour of the Courteous, or the Pardon of the Captious Reader. All I desire of any is, That for their own sakes they would read out, and consider before they censure, that they may not bring upon themselves the Guilt of Rash and Uncharitable Judging.



M A T T.



M A T T. VII. I.

*JUDGE not, that ye be
not judged.*



THESE Words are Part of
our Saviour's Sermon on the
Mount. The Jews were
greatly addicted to rash
and severe judging. They
thought themselves the spe-
cial Favourites of Heaven,
because they had *Abraham* to their Father; and
imagin'd that God regarded them more for their
external Privileges, than for their inward Quali-
fications; because they were of the true Church,
and the true Religion, tho' they were loose and
vicious in their Lives. And the *Scribes and Pha-
risees*

risees, who *trusted in themselves that they were Righteous*, despised the *Gentiles*, as *Sinners*, and condemn'd the Common People of their own Nation, as *curst*. Our Saviour warns his Hearers against this Vice, in the Words of my *Text*: *Judge not, that ye be not judged*. That is, “ Be not rash and uncharitable in censuring others, lest you suffer the same yourselves. Many times they, who are unmerciful in judging their Brethren, are paid home in their own Coin. The Cenforious fall under severe Censures. And He whose Tongue (as *Ishmael's Hand*) is against every Man, hath every Man's Tongue against him. But, however they escape here, they are obnoxious to the righteous Judgment of God. And He shall have judgment without Mercy, who shews no Mercy”.

CENSORIOUSNESS is one of the reigning Vices of the Age. 'Tis grown fashionable, and in Credit. *Pride* makes us arrogate to our selves what does not belong to us: *Self-love* prompts us to flatter ourselves, and to vilify others: *Envy* and *Ill-nature* incline us to spy, or to make Faults in our Brethren: *Party-Zeal* tempts, and seems to authorize us to brand such as are not of our Side. Every one sets up for a Judge, and takes upon him to arraign, and sentence the Actions, the Opinions, the secret Thoughts of others. Yea some presume to determine the final State of particular Persons, and to adjudge Churches, Nations, and great Bodies of Men to Eternal Perdition,

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tion, for differing from them in *speculative Opinions*, or *Modes of Worship*.

I APPEAL to your Consciences, my Brethren, that *these things ought not so to be*. And, I hope, you will bear with me while I warn you to beware of this growing Evil, whereof too many of all Sorts are guilty. And, God grant, that instead of accusing each other, we may every one of us *smite upon our Breasts*, and say, *What have I done?*

IN handling this Subject, my Work shall be,

I. To give the *Sense* of the *Text*, that you may see what *Judging* is not, and what is forbidden.

II. To inquire into the *Causes* of sinful Judging.

III. To represent unto you some of the ill Effects and Consequences of it.

IV. To propose some *Remedies* against it.

V. To offer some *Advice* to such as suffer by it.

I. I am to give the *Sense* of the *Text*, that you may see what *Judging* is not, and what is forbidden.

'TIS certain that our Saviour doth not forbid all Sorts of Judging. For

MAGIS-

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MAGISTRATES may hear and decide *Causes*; they may try, and sentence *Malefactors*.

MINISTERS are to judge of their own Acts, according to the Rules of God's Word, whom they are to admit to the Privileges and Communion of the Church, and whom they are to exclude.

PRIVATE Christians may judge of the Opinions and Actions of their Brethren, in order to discharge their Duty to them. They may judge what is evident and notorious, according to the Rules of Justice and Charity. They ought to *Rebuke* their Neighbour, and not suffer Sin upon him. Levit. xix. 17. To tell him his Faults, Mat. xviii. 15. if there be Hope of gaining him: but if he be openly profane, or seem to be impudent and incorrigible (like *Dogs* and *Swine*, Mat. vii. 6.) Reproofs are not to be cast away upon him. They are to withdraw from such as walk disorderly. 2 *Thes.* iii. 6. And not to eat with scandalous Sinners. 1 *Cor.* v. 11. Now, these Duties cannot be perform'd without passing a Judgment upon Men's Actions. 'Tis lawful to judge of the Truth or Falshood of Men's Opinions, of the Goodness or Badness of their Actions; that we may do what we can to convince the *Erroneous*, to reform the *Vicious*, and to restore such as are overtaken in a Fault.

ALL ought to judge themselves, to prove their own Work, and to try their spiritual State by the Rules of Holy Scripture. Were we more impartial in judging our selves, we should be less se-

vere

vere in censuring others : did we more narrowly examine our own Hearts, we should pry less into others Actions : and were we more strict in condemning our own Follies and Vices, we should be more favourable towards our Brethren's Mistakes and Failings. A humble Sense of our own Sins would check our censorious Humour, and restrain us from aggravating other Mens Faults. He who sets himself, in good earnest, to remove the *Beam out of his own Eye*, will not be over forward to spy *Motes in his Brother's Eye*.

EVERY Christian hath a Right to judge for himself, in Matters of Religion. We may and ought to use a *Judgment of Discretion*. God hath given us the *Holy Scriptures*, as the *only Rule* to direct us in the Way to Heaven; and the Faculty of *Reason*, that we may understand the Sense of Scripture. The *Scribes* and *Pharisees* usurp'd an Authority over the Consciences of the *Jews*, requiring them to believe all their Doctrines, and to obey all their Commands. And Mr. Henry thinks that my *Text* was intended for a *Reproof* to them, who were (as he saies) *very Rigid and Severe, very Magisterial and Supercilious in condemning all about them; as those commonly are, that are proud and conceited in justifying themselves*. Our Lord forbids his Disciples to be called Rabbis, or Masters: and to call any Man their Father upon the Earth. *Mat. xxiii. 8, — 10.* " We should call no Man " *Guide, or Master; no Father, no Church, no " Councils*, so as absolutely to submit our selves,

“ in the Concernment of our eternal Interests, to
 “ the Conduct of their Judgments, or give them
 “ Dominion over our Faith and Conscience*.”
 We ought not to *muffle* † up our own Understand-
 ings, or deliver our Reason and Faith over to
 any; so as to receive their *Opinions* with an *implicit*
Faith, or submit to their *Commands* with a *blind*
Obedience. Christ is our *Master*, the *Great Prophet*
 of the Church, by whom we must be taught; the
 King, by whom we must be ruled. The *Bible* is
 the *Statute-Book* of his Kingdom, the *Rule* of
Faith and *Life*, in which all things necessary to
 Salvation are evidently contain'd : this we ought
 to search; by this we ought to walk. 'Tis our
 Duty to endeavour to find out the true Sense and
 Meaning of the Scripture, in order to our obtain-
 ing everlasting Happiness. God hath given us
rational Faculties to guide and direct us : and we
 ought to make the best use of them that we can.
 We must judge with our own Reason, as well as
 see with our own Eyes.

EVERY Man hath an undoubted Right to
 judge of the Sense of Scripture *for Himself*, by
 his own Understanding : to judge *for Himself*,
 I say, and not *for Others*; nor yet *Others for Him*.
 Others are not bound to submit to his Judgment;
 nor is he bound to submit to the Judgment
 of Others, any further than he sees sufficient Rea-
 son to satisfy him. In Matters of *Faith*, in Mat-

*Dr. Whitby. † See Bp. Burnet's Exposition of the
 XXXIX. Articles. Artic. xix. pag. 182.

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ters of *Duty*, in Matters on which our *Eternal Happiness* doth depend, we must not be impos'd upon by any, how Great, how Learned, how Holy soever, to profess to believe what we do not believe, or to pretend to believe what we do not understand: nor may we receive any thing as a necessary Article of Faith, which after due Examination we cannot find contain'd in the Holy Scripture, or plainly prov'd by it, tho' recommended by the Authority of *Fathers*, of antient *Councils*, of modern *Synods*, of faithful *Martyrs*, of learned *Confessors*, of pious *Ministers*; tho' impos'd under the severest *Penalties*, and inforc'd by the most dreadful *Anathemas*; tho' held for many Ages by Men of greatest Note. For, if we do this, our Faith is built not upon the Testimony of the Living and True God, but upon the Opinions and Determinations of fallible Men, which is a sandy Foundation.

'Tis in vain to tell me that such *Synods* or *Councils* have decreed it; that such *Churches* have receiv'd it; that such *Princes* or *States* have impos'd it; that such learned Men have written for it; and, that I also must profess it, and assent to it, upon Pain of being silenc'd, Excommunicated, or Burnt for a Heretick in this World, and Damm'd in the next: if after an impartial Search, and fervent Prayer to God for the Assistance of the Holy Spirit, I can find no Warrant for it in the Holy Scripture, I ought not to profess it, to assent to it, or to subscribe it.

THE Church of *Rome** forbids this Liberty of Private Judgment, under severe Penalties, that she may exalt her own Authority, and establish an *Infallible Judge*. Accordingly, she takes upon her to declare new Articles of Faith, and to make new Creeds, and impose them upon those of her Communion. The new Converts in *France* were oblig'd, among many others, to subscribe the following Article †, which is a Part of Pope *Paul* the Fourth's Creed :

“ I RECEIVE the Holy Scripture, but with
 “ that Sense in which the Holy Mother Church
 “ hath, and doth understand it, to whom it doth
 “ belong to judge of the true Sense and Interpretation of the sacred Scriptures. And I shall
 “ never take it, nor interpret it otherwise, than
 “ according to the unanimous Consent of the
 “ Fathers.”

It were to be wish'd that *Protestants* had not given too much to *Councils* and *Fathers*, in Matters of Faith. In a Confession of the *Reformed* in *France*, I find the following Words : “ In this
 “ Mystery [of the Trinity] we allow of that which
 “ the Four antient Councils have determined ;
 “ and we do detest all Sects and Heresies condemn'd by those antient Doctors, St. *Athanasius*,
 “ St. *Cyril*, St. *Hilary*, and St. *Ambrose* ”. What is

* Vide Canones & Decreta Concil. Tridentini, Sess. 4. Decret. De Editione & Usu sacr. Lib. † *Quick's* Synodic. Introduction, p. 139.

this but to make those Four Councils, and the Writings of those Four Doctors, a Rule of Faith? And some among our selves have set the Authority of the Church very high. In some *English Bibles* * of the last Translation, you have these Words, in the Contents of CXLIX Psalm: [*Of the Power which God hath given to the Church to Rule the Consciences of Men.*] And, to name no more, we have one, at present, who presses Men to submit to the yet unexamin'd Decisions of the Church, for meer Authority.

LAMENTABLE is the Case of the Common People in *Popish* Countries, where they are not suffer'd to read the Holy Scriptures in their own Language, nor to Judge for themselves. We pity our Brethren in *France*, who were Dragoon'd out of their Estates and Religion, and were compell'd by various Torments to make such *Declarations* and *Subscriptions*, as were contrary to the Dictates of their Consciences. Our Blessed Lord, who came not to destroy, but to save, wants neither the Craft, nor Cruelty of Men to uphold his Interest. The *Maxims*, *Rewards*, and *Penalties* of his Kingdom are not of this World. Let such as are for enslaving the Bodies and Souls of Men betake themselves to these Arts, that they may support their tottering Cause: let them compass Sea and Land to make *Profelytes*: let them erect

* Bible Printed by *Burk*, and *Daniel*, 1639. 4to. And 1648. 8vo. &c.

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Congregations to propagate their Faith, and Courts of Inquisition to root out what they call Heresy: let them send abroad their Missionaries, and employ booted Apostles to list some, and to press others into the Service of their Church: God forbid that Protestants should do what may countenance, or excuse them in such Methods. Force and Persecution is better fitted to make Hypocrites, than to reduce Hereticks. " Human Violence, "[saith one] may make Men Counterfeit, but " cannot make them Believe; and is therefore fit " for nothing but to breed Form without, and " Atheism within. All † the Power in the World " is neither fit to convince, nor able to compel " a Man's Conscience to consent to any thing. " Worldly Terror may prevail so far as to make " Men profess a Religion, which they Believe " not: — But to force either any Man to believe " what he believes not, or any Honest Man to " dissemble what he does believe (if God Com- " mands him to profess it) or to profess what he " does not believe, all the Powers in the World " are too weak, with all the Powers of Hell to " assist them."*

I DOUBT not, but upon diligent Observation it will be found, that there is least of the Life and Power of Religion, where People are compell'd to profess any Establish'd Religion. When Reli-

* *Chillingworth*, Chap. V. §. 96. † *Idem*. Chap. II. §. 18.

gious Tenets do not come recommended to the Understanding by persuasive Arguments, and prov'd by clear Texts of Scripture, but are impos'd by *Penal Laws*, and profess'd for fear of Incapacities, Fines, and Suffering (as 'tis in *Papish Countries*) few believe them in good earnest. The *Dragoons* in *France*, and the *Inquisitors* in *Spain*, and *Portugal* have rooted out *Heresy*; but the common People have almost lost all Sense of Religion: they are taught to believe as the Church believes, and to take their Faith upon Content, without troubling their Heads to understand it.

TAKE away this *Liberty of Judging for our selves*, then they who suffer'd Torments, and Death for refusing to profess *Transubstantiation*, were in the Wrong: then the Old *Puritans*, and *Nonconformists*, who were Suspended, Fin'd, Imprison'd, Ejected, or Silenc'd, for refusing to make such *Subscriptions* and *Declarations*, as were contrary to the Convictions of their Consciences, were too nice and scrupulous: then Christians may submit to any Imposition, join in any Communion, and be of any Religion.

THUS you see what judging is lawful. I come now to shew what judging is unlawful.

1. RASH and *Hasty*:

2. SEVERE and *Uncharitable Judging*, are unlawful. These often go together. I shall give some Instances of each. And,

First, OF *Rash and Hasty Judging*.

(1). THEY

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(1). THEY are like to Judge rashly, who are unqualify'd for the Part they act. Many pass Sentences in Causes, and on Persons, of which they are ignorant. Men of clear Heads, and who have made diligent Search into the Sense of Scripture, are so sensible of the Darkeness of human Understanding, that when they meet with Difficulties, they suspend their Judgment, and take Time to examine what appears doubtful to them: whereas, such as have shallow Capacities, are for the most part very confident of their own Apprehensions, forward to impose their Opinions upon others, and ready to condemn those who do not forthwith receive them. Sound Knowledge and true Wisdom make Men modest, candid, and charitable; but *superficial Knowledge puffeth up*: and such as have more Heat than Light, are apt to judge hastily, and to *speak evil of the things which they understand not*, 2 Pet. ii. 22.

(2) THEY are guilty in this respect, who are *busy Bodies in other Mens matters*. 1. Pet. iv. 15. who narrowly pry into the Affairs of their Brethren; or pump their Neighbours, to know their secret Thoughts; or are inquisitive to get an account of what is done in private Families, which they are not concern'd to be acquainted with. They who do this out of vain Curiosity, or on purpose to find matter for Censure, often blame the Conduct, and innocent Actions of such, as are not under their Jurisdiction, without Cause. They who fall under the unjust Censures of such Pragmatical

matical People, may appeal from them as *incompetent Judges*; and have Reason to propose to them the *Hebrew's Question to Moses*, Acts vii. 27. *Who made thee a Judge?*

(3.) THEY also judge rashly, who condemn without good Proof and clear Evidence, without understanding Matter of Law and Matter of Fact, and without giving those whom they sentence a fair Trial and a full Hearing. A prudent and upright judge will inquire into the Merits of the Cause, which is brought before him. He will give the Accused Liberty to make his Defence, and produce his Witnesses; and will patiently hear and consider what is alleg'd in his behalf. For, as *he that answereth*, so he that judgeth a Matter before he heareth it, it is Folly and Shame unto him. Prov. xviii. 13. The Jewish Law did not judge any Man before it heard him, and knew what he did. John vii. 51. And the Romans brought the Accusers and the Accused face to face, that the Accused might have Liberty to answer for himself. Acts xxv. 15. A Judge, when he hath received a Charge, should hear the Defence; for he is commission'd Oyer and Terminer, first to hear both Sides, and then to determine. He who judges blindly, and hastily, is not like to judge righteous Judgment.

SUCH then judge rashly who condemn Mens Opinions without hearing, or weighing their Arguments; without endeavouring to resolve their Doubts, or answer their Objections. Many

a rigorous Sentence is pass'd upon slight and groundless Conjectures, upon Tittle Tattle and common Fame, upon private Letters and secret Whispers. The Jews were not to proceed against an *Idolater* without good Proof by *Two or Three Witnesses*. 'Twas not enough that they were told of it, and had heard of it; but they were to enquire diligently, Whether the Thing were true and certain. Deut. xvii. 4, 6. And 'tis an *Apostolical Canon*, 1 Tim. v. 19. *Against an Elder receive not an Accusation, but before [or upon the Testimony of] Two or Three Witnesses*. But how are the Reputations of innocent Persons blasted upon bare Hearsay and Suspicion? Their own Jealousies and evil Surmises pass with censorious People instead of Evidence; and are thought sufficient to justify them, for laying an intolerable Load of Infamy upon their Brethren.

Secondly, I AM to give some Instances of *severe and uncharitable Judging*.

THEN do Men judge uncharitably,

(1.) WHEN they entertain causeless Prejudices against those whom they censure. *Ill-will* seldom speaks, or judges well. A Judge ought to act impartially, without Favour or Affection; to proceed without Respect of Persons. To this End he should divest himself of Prepossession, Envy, Anger, and Disaffection. Prejudice makes Men Parties, and such are not fit to be Judges. For they determine the Cause with themselves, before they

they hear it ; and resolve to condemn him whom they have a Grudge against, right or wrong. 'Tis from hence many Christians are so severe in their Censures. " Such a one is not of my " Party ; and therefore he is a *Hypocrite* ; to be " despis'd, and separated from ; or, he is a " *Schismatick*, who hath separated himself from " the Body of Christ ; therefore hate him, and " thunder out *Anathemas* against him. Such a " one is not *Orthodox* [that is he is not of MY " OPINION] give him an ill Name ; call " him *Heretick* ; represent him as obstinate, and " self-condemned ; never give your selves the " Trouble to examine his Arguments, or to let " him speak for himself ; take it for granted " that he hath nothing to say, at least, nothing " of Moment ; instead of reasoning with him " calmly, in order to convince him, revile him, " expose him, and after a while break off Com- " munion with him, and reject him.

THEY are not like to judge charitably who hear, and try such as are accused, with a desire to punish, and a Resolution to condemn. Though we ought not to flatter any in their Sins, to shut our Eyes against the Light, to call evil good, or good evil ; yet we should not hunt for Scandal, judge that which lies out of Sight, or pass our Sentence upon Uncertainties. For *Charity thinketh no Evil, believeth all Things, hopeth all Things.* 1 Cor. xiii. 5, 7. It obligeth us to proceed with Candour and Moderation,

to put the most favourable Construction on our Brother's Words and Actions which they will bear, and to excuse and mollify Things as far as we may. It will incline us to take notice of what is good in our Brother, and not to make the worst of what is bad : to pity such as are overtaken in a Fault, to pray for them, and to restore them in the Spirit of Meekness, considering our selves, lest we also be tempted. Gal. vi. 1. " Such a one is (I hope) sincere and good in the main, though overcome by the Violence of Temptation. Was I in his Circumstances, I fear, I should have done as bad or worse than he." But Malice and Prejudice put Men upon taking up and spreading Reports against their Neighbours, by which they may suffer in their Credit or Interest. It will prompt them to aggravate their Miscarriages, to put bad Interpretations upon their Words and Actions, and to take every thing by the wrong Handle. It will make them rigid in their Sentence, and incline them to condemn Men for what neither God nor their own Consciences condemn them. It will also hinder them from making reasonable Allowances, and from taking notice of such Circumstances as would wholly excuse them, or greatly alleviate their Faults.

(2.) WHEN they judge Mens Hearts and Thoughts, their Purposes and Intentions, further than they are expressed by their Words, or declar'd by their Actions, We have no Capacity to

to judge what we cannot understand. The Heart of Man is a great Deep, which we can't fathom. If therefore I condemn my Brother for an Hypocrite, tho' his Conversation is unblameable; if I accuse him for an obstinate Heretick, when he earnestly desires to find out the Truth, readily owns whatever he can see contain'd in, or founded upon the Word of God, and professes a hearty Willingness to retract any Opinion which he shall be convinc'd to be erroneous; I do not judge charitably. 'Tis God's Prerogative to search the Heart, and know the Thoughts; and it doth not become me to encroach upon it, nor will it excuse me, to pretend that my Brother is carrying on ill Designs which he will not own; that he holds dangerous Errors which he doth not care to profess; and tho' he hath made sound Subscriptions and Declarations, he hath some mental Reservations, and secret *ill Meanings*; or that his Heart doth not go with his Hand and Tongue. For what am I, that I should presume to judge my Brother's Heart, to censure his secret Thoughts, or to condemn the invisible Workings of his Mind?

(3.) WHEN they are forward to judge of Mens *final State*, upon the Account of their *speculative Opinions*. To say such a one is guilty of a *damning Schism*, he is no Christian, and can lay no claim to the Blessings of the Gospel Covenant, because he separates from that Part of the Church to which I belong; such a one is a Repro-
bare,

bate, and holds a *damnable Heresy*, because he doth not assent to my private *Interpretations of Scripture*, which I call *Fundamental Articles of Faith*, whereas he professes he can see no Foundation for them in Scripture; is highly uncharitable and unreasonable. I think he is in an *Error*, and he thinks the same of me; but, for ought I know, he is sincere in his Search after Truth. Why then should I not hope that if he errs, God will either discover the Truth to him, or pardon his involuntary Mistakes? Perhaps he, whom I doom to everlasting Burnings, because he differs from me in Opinion, doth truly *fear God*, and *work Righteousness*, and shall be *accepted of him*; when I, with all my Zeal for *Orthodoxy*, am in danger of perishing for want of *Charity*. God can pass a certain Judgment concerning Mens final State: to him therefore let us leave it, and not presume to **damn* those whom we have no Skill to try.

(4.) WHEN they misinterpret the Providences of God towards such as are not of their Mind and Way. If any great Affliction befalls them, they are apt to look upon it as a *Judgment*, for

* Dr. Owen says of Grotius, "I do not entertain in my self any hard Thoughts, nor would I beget in others any evil Surmises of the eternal Condition of that Man. — I am very slow to judge of Mens Acceptation with God by the Apprehension of their Understandings." *Vindicia Evangelicæ* Epistle Dedicatory, p. 6.

their

their holding such Opinions, and to conclude that God testifies from Heaven against their *Errors*. Many who are exemplary for *Holiness*, meet with great *Troubles*. *Whom the Lord loveth he correcteth*. Prov. iii. 12. And, *There is no judging Love or Hatred by what is before us*. Eccles. ix. 1. They whom we account Sound in the Faith, and eminently Pious, are obnoxious to such Calamities as befall those whom we call *Hereticks*. 'Tis our fond Self-Love makes us imagine that God declares in our Favour, when the like, or worse Things may, we know not how soon, befall Us, or those of our Persuasion. It becomes us therefore to suspend our Censures, and to *judge nothing before the Time*. 1 Cor. iv. 5.

(5.) WHEN they impute to their Brethren such Opinions as they disown, and charge upon them such Consequences of their Opinions as they disclaim. 'Tis common for those who are uppermost, or have got a Majority, to brand Dissenters with odious Names; to call them *Fanatics*, *Schismatics*, *Hereticks*, that they may expose them to the Hatred and Rage of the Populace. Perhaps I have been told that my Brother holds some false Opinion; but, upon Enquiry, I find that he utterly denies it: I imagine that some dangerous Errors are the necessary Consequences of his Opinion; but he can see no such thing, and perfectly abhors those Consequences. Shall I accuse and condemn him for what he detests and disowns? I should not be willing to be thus
us'd

us'd my self, and ought not to deal thus with others.

THUS you see what Judging is not, and what is forbidden.

II. I COME now to enquire into the *Causes* of rash and uncharitable Judging. The chief of which, I conceive, are these Four.

1. *Self-Conceit.*

2. *Self-Love.*

3. *Party-Zeal.*

4. *Ambition, and Worldly Interest.*

I. SELF-CONCEIT is one great Cause of sinful Judging. They who are proud of their own Understandings and Attainments, and think themselves Head and Shoulders above others in Knowledge, despise the Judgments, and condemn the Opinions of those who differ from them. He who *thinks himself to be something*, is very apt to *think others nothing*. If once a Man fancies himself wiser, and better, and stronger than other Christians, 'tis much if he doth not condemn them for Ignorance, and Folly, and Weakness. The *Pharisee*, who boasted of his Goodness, despis'd the *Publican*. *Luke xviii. 11.* Proud Men think themselves slighted, if they be not worshipped: they would fain have all submit to their Judgments, and receive their Dictates as Oracles. They can't endure such as out-shine them,

them, or are prefer'd before them. Their Hearts rise against those, who say, or do any thing to diminish their Authority, or Reputation : and 'tis usual for them to censure, and vilify such as presume to dissent from them.

2. SELF-LOVE is another Cause of this Sin. We are naturally fond of our selves, of our own Apprehensions and Opinions. We imagine we have Excellencies which we have not, and over-value those we have : and this makes us prone to neglect and despise others. We overlook their good Qualities, lessen their Virtues, and magnify their Faults. If they thwart us in our Opinions, our Affections are alienated from them, and we entertain hard Thoughts of them. How often do we sacrifice our Brethren for a Notion ; and think them unworthy our Love, and Esteem, if they do not jump with us in every *Punctilio* ? Some presume to cut off whole Churches from the Body of Christ, and to leave them to the *uncovenanted Mercies* of God, because they do not fall in with their *Scheme of Church Government* : and others pronounce very severe Sentences upon all, who dare not subscribe their *unscriptural Articles*. One is branded for a *perverse Schismatick*, and another is doom'd for an *obstinate Heretick*, for not observing *Canons*, and professing *Doctrines*, which they can see no Warrant for in the Word of God.

3. PARTY-ZEAL makes many Censorious. They who have list'd themselves into a Party,

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do, for the most Part, espouse all the Opinions, and Interests of their Party. Their Understandings are fetter'd, their Reasons captivated, and their Affections perverted. They take it for granted, that they, and those of their Side, are in the Right, and others in the Wrong; and they can't bear with such as dissent from them. Their blind Zeal for what they account Truth, makes them disparage the Persons, aggravate the Faults, and rejoice in the Miscarriages of those whom they think erroneous: yea, they think they *do God Service*, when they reproach and vilify them. When they *hate their Brethren*, and cast them out, they say, *Let the LORD be glorified*. *Isa. lxxv. 5.* Should they forbear to slander and defame them, they would be ready to suspect themselves of Lukewarmness. Furious Bigots place much of their Religion in speculative Opinions, and have little to commend them but their Zeal, for what they call *Orthodoxy*: and 'tis notorious that the *Orthodoxy* of many is owing, in a great Measure, to their *Laziness*, or want of *Capacity*. They who have little narrow Souls, and shallow Brains, seldom want *bitter Zeal*, which is accompanied with *Strife*, *Confusion*, and *every evil Work*. *James iii. 16.*

4. AMBITION, and Worldly Interest, greatly dispose Men to this Vice. They who affect to be High, and Honourable, and to get themselves a Name, often juggle such as stand in their Way: as *Diotrephes*, who loved to have the Prehemi-

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nence, did prate with malicious Words, against such as He thought would out-shine Him, and was for casting them out of the Church. 3. Epist. John, ver. 9, 10.

SOMETIMES a Pretence of Zeal for the Truth is used as a Cloak of Covetousness: and the miserable Worldling thinks that this will cover the base Arts, and sanctify all the pious Frauds which He uses to compass his Ends.

EXTERNAL Advantages also are a strong Temptation to such as are advanc'd above others, to over-rate their own Judgments, and to usurp an Authority over their Dependents: and they who will not come into their Measures, and resign their Understandings to their Management, must expect to fall under their Censures, and to feel their Resentments.

III. HAVING given some Instances of Rash and Uncharitable Judging, and inquir'd into the Causes of it, I proceed to set before you some of its ill Effects, and Consequences.

I. 'TIS very impious with respect to God. 'Tis invading his Office, usurping his Authority, and incroaching upon his Prerogative to Know, and Try, and Judge the Hearts, and final States of Men. How heinous an Offence is it for weak fallible, Mortals to thrust themselves into the Judgment-Seat of Christ, and to take his

Work out of his Hands: to Lord it over his Heritage, and to pass Sentence upon his Subjects?

2. 'Tis highly injurious to our Neighbour. While the Censorious assume what doth not belong to them, they punish *another's Servant*, who must answer for his Thoughts, and Words, and Actions, at another Bar, and *stand or fall to his own Master*. Rom. xiv. 4. They impair their Brother's Credit, rob Him of his good Name, expose Him to hatred and Contempt; and if He be in any publick Office, or Station, they render Him incapable of doing that Service, which otherwise He might, in the Church, or in the World.

3. It disturbs the Peace of the Church, and causes Breaches and Divisions. It takes off Christians from minding and practising the great Things of Religion, and makes them *turn aside unto vain Jangling*. 1. Tim. i. 6. They who suffer by it make it their Business to defend their Principles, and to vindicate their Reputation; and so the Life and Power of Godliness is like to be at a stand, and to decay. It sows Discord among Brethren, causes Animosity, is the Parent of Wrath, Railing and Reviling. It separates Friends; alienates Ministers, and private Christians from each other; sets Families, and Churches on Fire. It hath done much to inflame the Nation, and to divide the Establish'd Church: and God grant that it may not divide the Churches of the *Dissenters*, weaken their Interest, undermine their Liberty, and be an Occasion

casion of their losing those *Privileges* which are yet left them.

4. It tends to Persecution and Cruelty. To what can we ascribe the Incapacities, Fines, and barbarous Cruelties which have been devis'd, and inflicted upon the account of Differences in Religion, but to uncharitable Judging, and that fiery Zeal which goes along with it? Furious Bigots, who unjustly condemn their Brethren for *Heresy*, and *Schism*, think those who fall under their Sentence unfit for human Society, yea unworthy to live in the World: and 'tis natural for such as think their Brethren *Hereticks*, to use them ill: For, (as a very great Man observes *) "Exorbitant Zeal is the same every where; and the Spirit of *uneasy Censure*, in the Beginning, will end when ever it can, in *Gibbets*, and *Gallies*, and *Inquisitions*." This hath discourag'd Trade; impoverish'd Countries; sent many Thousand peaceable industrious Christians into Banishment; erected cruel Tribunals; fill'd Prisons and Dungeons; set on foot Bloody Massacres; and kindled those Flames, in which Multitudes of Christ's faithful Martyrs have been consum'd. 'Tis true, at present among us the *Laws* secure even *Hereticks* *convict* from the *Flames*; and the *Spirit of Persecution* is disarm'd, and hath it's Hands bound up, by the happy *Revolution*; but 'tis easy to

* Ld. Bishop of Bangor's Letter to Dr. Snape, p. 51.

perceive,

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perceive, that 'tis neither dead, nor banish'd: and who knows but it may again break loose, resume it's former Whips and Chains, Axes and Fire-brands? Besides, tho' *Hereticks* can't be *Burnt*, nor easily *Convicted*; yet they who are so call'd, may be prosecuted for speaking, or writing against the *Establish'd Doctrine*; they may be *Excommunicated*, *Fin'd*, and thrown into a *Jail*, there to Lie, and Languish, and Rot, while their Families Starve; unless they *Resant*, and say they have chang'd their Opinion, when perhaps they have not, and cannot: and what is this, but to play the Hypocrite, and expose themselves to the *Wrath of God*, and the *Damnation of Hell*? But, suppose the *Censorious* do not proceed so far, against those whom they uncharitably condemn, yet may they deal *Hardly* and *Cruelly* with them: for the bare * *Imputation* of *Heresy* is enough to ruin a Man, as the World goes. Let *Ministers*, who have got a *Name* for *Orthodoxy*, brand any of their Brethren, how Learned, how Pious so ever, with the odious

* An *Heretick* is a Term which there is a strange *Magick* in: "---- 'Tis suppos'd to include in it every thing that is Bad. It makes every thing appear *Odious* and *Deform'd*; it dissolves all *Friendships*, extinguishes all former kind *Sentiments*, however just and well deserv'd: and from the Time a Man is deem'd a *Heretick*, 'tis *Charity* to act against all *Rules of Charity*; and the more they violate the *Laws of God*, in dealing with Him, 'tis in their Opinion, *doing God the greater Service*. "---- *Orthodoxy* will cover a *Multitude of Sins*, but a *Cloud of Virtue* cannot cover the Want of the *Minutest Part* of *Orthodoxy*."

Name

Name of *Hereticks*, the *good* they might have done is at an End, the *Success* of their Labours is hinder'd, and they render'd useles. Their People, who before had a secret Veneration for them, will flight them, and think it their Duty to defame and injure them; their exemplary Piety shall be accounted Hypocrisy, their Humility spiritual Pride; and a wrong Turn shall be given to all they say, and do. Reproach and Infamy shall be heap'd upon them; their most conspicuous Virtues shall not be regarded; the Faults of their Lives shall be ript up, and laid open; their Passions and Indiscretions shall be remembred, and every thing strained to their Disadvantage. Secret Vices shall be imputed to them, and they shall be accounted *Reprobates* in a State of *Damnation*, and pray'd for as *abandon'd Wretches*, from whom God hath withdrawn his *Grace*. And all this for no other Crime than searching the Scriptures, taking them for their *Rule*, being faithful to their *Consciences*, and refusing to submit their Judgments to *received Notions*, which their Brethren call the *Common Faith*. And wherein is such a Load of Misery and Infamy lighter than *Persecution*?

IV. I AM in the next Place, to propose some Remedies against this Evil.

I. THAT you may not rashly and uncharitably judge others, *consider yourselves*. Reflect upon

upon your own Defects, and Miscarriages. A humble Sense of your own Folly, Ignorance, and Errors, will make you wary in undertaking, and compassionate in executing the Office of a Judge: you will be willing to give such Allowances to others, as you will want and desire your selves. He that is truly vile in his own Eyes, will not be forward to vilify others. When you are about to pass a severe Sentence upon any, lay your Hand upon your own Heart, and think thus with yourselves: "How should I like such Dealing? How do the Censures of my Brethren pierce and wound my Heart? Is not my Brother of the same Make with me? And will not my rash Sentence be grievous to him?" Dwell much at home; and if you are for finding Faults, you will find enough there to keep you employ'd. Watch over your own Hearts and Ways; Judge, and amend what is amiss in yourselves; and you will have neither Mind, nor Leisure, pragmatically to condemn others. They who are the greatest Strangers to their own Hearts, and whose Religion lies very much in *Notions*, and *speculative Opinions*, are most forward to receive Calumnies, and to pronounce rigid Sentences against their Neighbours.

2. Do not lift yourselves into a Party. Never confine the Church of Christ, or your Charity, to one Side. Take heed that Prejudice do not misrepresent the *Opinions* and *Actions* of such as you agree with, and such as you dissent from.

from. Remember that a siding factious Zeal will put Men upon Railing and Cenforiousness; will prompt them to *lye for the Truth*; and make them imagine, that they cannot speak any thing too bad of those whom they account *Schismaticks*, or *Hereticks*.

3. HAVE not *Mens Persons* [or Writings] in *Admiration*. Jude ver. 16. When you are searching for Truth, regard not the *Persons of Men*, so as to receive their Opinions, which have neither Probability, nor Proof, as the *Standard of Orthodoxy*. Do not ignorantly cry up, and even idolize some, so as to take their Words for Oracles, and their Writings for Gospel; nor yet rashly decry, and slight others of great Worth, and Learning, and Judgment, for having different Apprehensions; so as to suspect whatever comes from them, how ever clearly propos'd, and substantially prov'd. Neither embrace nor reject *Mens Opinions*, without examining and weighing their Arguments: but prove all things, and hold fast that which is good. 1 Thess. v. 21.

4. STAND fast in the Liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not intangled again with the Yoke of Bondage. Gal. v. 1. Contend earnestly for the Faith, which was once deliver'd unto the Saints. Jude ver. 6. Appear for the Honour of the Holy Scripture, and keep close to it, as the Rule of Faith: and hold fast the great Fundamental Principle of the Reformation, Liberty of judging for your selves according to Scripture. Never submit to
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those cruel *Taskmasters*, who hang Salvation on *Scholastick Niceties*, and impose their own Interpretations of Scripture as essential Articles of Faith; which, when they please, they may increase, and double, as *Pharoah* did the *Israelites* their *Tale of Bricks*. Those Things which are necessary to be believ'd in order to Salvation, are not many, and they are plainly deliver'd in the Word of God. The *Fundamental Doctrines* of our holy Religion are in themselves plain, and level to the Understandings of all sorts of People. The most ancient *Creeds* extant are short. The Excellency of Faith doth not consist in the *Number* of Articles to be believed, but in its Steadiness, and Effectual Working. When the *Eunuch* desir'd to be baptiz'd, *Philip* did not puzzle him with a long and intricate *Creed*; but admitted him into the Church, upon his professing to believe with all his Heart this very * short one, *That Jesus Christ is the Son of God*. Acts viii. 37.

* Olim Fides erat in Vita, magis quam in Articulorum Professione. Mox necessitas admonuit ut Articuli præscriberentur, sed pauci, & Apostolica Sobrietate. Tandem — creverunt Articuli, decrevit Sinceritas: Efferbuit contentio, refrixit Charitas. — Articulorum Myriades eruperunt. Hinc deventum est ad Terrores, & Minas. — Tortoribus huc adigimus homines, ut credant quod non credunt, — & intelligant quod non intelligunt. *Erasmus* in Prefatione ad *Hilarii* opera.

OPPOSE

OPPOSE all arbitrary Impositions, and tyrannical Encroachments. Give unto *Cesar* the Things that are *Cesar's*; but reserve your Consciences for God. People ought to know them that are over them in the Lord, and to esteem them highly in Love for their Works Sake: they are requir'd to Pray for them, and they have Reason to bless God for their Gifts and Graces: but I do not find that they are commanded to yield absolute Subjection to their Authority, or to sacrifice their own Understandings to the Humours, or Fancies of their Spiritual Guides. They should use them as *Helpers of their Joy*, but not suffer them to have Dominion over their Faith. 1 Cor. i. 24.

LET none of us arrogate that Authority to ourselves, which we condemn in others. We deny that the Bishop of *Rome* hath a Right to decide Controversies, and to bind the Church to submit to his Decisions: and shall we talk as dogmatically in obscure Points, as if we were seated in the *infallible Chair*? Shall we claim that Authority in Matters of Faith to ourselves, which we refuse to others? Shall we exercise Jurisdiction over Mens Consciences, and Hereticate them for differing from us in speculative Opinions, which they can see no Foundation for in the Word of God? Shall we worry them out of their Reputation, silence, or starve them, because they cannot swallow every thing which we would cram down their Throats? Let us not act as if we were the

Persons, and as tho' *Wisdom*, and *Orthodoxy* should die with us, While we complain of the *Impositions* of others, let us not discover an *imposing Spirit* our selves. When we think some *incapacitating Laws* a great *Hardship* upon us, let us not go about to *incapacitate* our Brethren; to deprive the Church of their Labours, and them of their Credit, and Livelihood. Let us use *Reason* to persuade, but never have recourse to *Force* or *Threats* to awe, and affright any into our Notions, and Measures.

Let some, thro' *Sloth*, will not examine the Grounds of their Faith; if others are influenc'd by the Nods of the *Great*, or fall in with the Opinion of the *Many*; let us watch against such a lazy, abject, ductile Temper. If any think they ought never to quit those Notions they imbib'd in their Childhood; if they are resolv'd to convince the World that they understand the Scripture no better; and are neither more wise, nor more charitable, at Fifty or Sixty, than they were at Three or Four and Twenty; let us go on unto *Perfection*, and endeavour to grow in *Grace*, and in the Knowledge of our Lord and Saviour *Jesus Christ*. 2 *Pet.* iii. 18. If any fight in the Dark for their Party; follow their Leaders blindfold; judge of the Truth of Doctrines by those that hold them; hate, reproach, and silence some; and tempt others to prevaricate and damn their Souls, by requiring them to profess what they do not believe, what they think to be false, what the

the *Imposers* themselves own to be *infinitely beyond* our *Understandings*: let us chuse rather to suffer by their Cruelty, than to join with them in their Tyranny.

LET us not think we are bound to continue in the same Sentiments all our Days, but still lie open to Conviction. If we see Cause to repent of any Subscriptions or Declarations we have made, to retract any Errors we held in our younger Years; let this withhold us from making Fetters for other Mens Understandings, or laying Snares for their Consciences. If we act against our own Judgments, by complying with such Terms of Communion as we think sinful, or by professing such Articles as appear to us false, doubtful, or *intelligible*, we expose our selves to the righteous Judgment of God: whereas, if we believe the Holy Scripture to be the Word of God, if we sincerely endeavour to believe it in the true Sense, and to live according to it, we have Reason to hope that God will pardon our *simple*, and *purely involuntary* Errors. * For, "to say that God will damn them for such Errors, who are Lovers of him, and Lovers of Truth, is to rob Man of his Comfort, and God of his Goodness; it is to make Man desperate, and God a Tyrant."

BESIDES what is a pretended Assent to what we do not understand, or an hypocritical Profession of Faith, which is the Effect of Force,

* *Chillingworth*, Answer to the Preface, §. xxv.

or Fear, and not of Conviction, good for? To what purpose should Men be requir'd to assent to Doctrines, which when they are propos'd, they hear or read Words, but do not know the Meaning of them? Will such a Faith be acceptable to God, or profitable to Men? Will it purify the Heart, work by Love, overcome the World, support under the Troubles of Life, or yield Comfort at the Approach of Death? Wherein is it better than an illiterate Papist's muttering over Latin Prayers? Why then should it be exacted, and that with Earnestness? When, I say, *We cannot believe what we do not understand?* I have the concurrent Opinion of the best Divines. Dr. Sherlock, Of a Judge of Controversies, p. 5. "*To teach Men to believe without Understanding, is to teach them to believe they know not what, nor why.*" Bp. Stillingfleet's Answer to K. Charles II'd's Papers, p. 32. "*How can a Man believe what he understands not the Sense and Meaning of?*" Dr. Samuel Werenfels's Defence of Private Judgment, p. 33. "*To believe, and not know what you believe, or to believe a Proposition, the Meaning of which you do not understand, is a Contradiction.*" Mr. Baxter's True Way of Concord, p. 129, 140. "*Belief without Understanding is but a dead Notion, or Name, or rather a Contradiction.*" To believe is to assent to a Proposition. Now, how can I assent to a Proposition, if I do not understand its Terms, and their Connexion? I grant, some Things are clearly reveal'd *That they are:* as that
 God

God is *Omniscient, Omnipresent*, and the like; the *Manner* of which is not reveal'd, and cannot be comprehended by us: as *How* God knows all Things, and is in all Places. The *Matter* or *Thing* reveal'd is an *Article of Faith*, but the *Manner* *How* it is, being not reveal'd to my *Understanding*, can be no Object of my Faith. See Bp. *Sanderſon*, on 1 *Tim.* iii. 16. Sect. 14. — 19. Dr. *Whitby* on *Luke* xii. 57.

IF “The holy Scripture * containeth all things
“ necessary to Salvation, so that whatsoever is
“ not read therein, nor may be proved thereby,
“ is not to be required of any Man to be believed
“ as an Article of Faith, or to be thought requi-
“ site to Salvation:” If “The Church † ought
“ not to decree any thing against Holy Writ, or
“ to inforce any thing to be believed for necessity
“ of Salvation besides it.” If “Those || Things
“ which are necessary to be known, believed, and
“ observed for Salvation are so *clearly* propounded,
“ and opened in some Place of Scripture or other,
“ that not only the *Learned*, but the *Unlearned* in
“ a due use of the ordinary Means, may attain
“ unto a sufficient Understanding of them:”
Then let us not injoin any thing as necessary to
be *known, believ'd, or observ'd* in order to Salvation,
which is not so *clearly propounded, and opened* in
Scripture. Let us leave all Christians to that *Li-*

* Vith Article of the Church of *England*. † XXth
Article. || *Westminster Assembly's Confession*, Chap. I. § 7.

erty, in which Christ and his Apostles left them; and lay aside *Tyranny* and *Cruelty*, which are the Devil's Instruments to divide the Church, and to enslave the World.

SHALL we vainly imagine, that we can speak of the Things of God, better than in the Words of God: and presumptuously impose our own Expositions of Scripture, as if they were Divine Revelations? Shall we set up the *Darling Idols* of our Minds, and require all about us to fall down and worship them, upon Pain of having the Fierceness of our Wrath let loose upon them? Hath a *Majority of Votes* in any Council, Synod, or Assembly a Right to make, or to declare that to be a *Fundamental*, or a *Heresy*, which was not so before? Or to coin new *Creeds*, and frame *Tests* for the discovering or making *Hereticks*? Hath the Scripture lost its *Sufficiency* and *Plainness*? Let not *Protestants*, *Dissenting Protestants*, hate, reproach, and ruin any, for refusing to subscribe the Words of Men, as the Words of God: nor give Men occasion to apply to us, what one said concerning the Church of *Rome*, * "That our Doctrine may, like a *Snow-Ball*, increase with rolling, and again melt away, and decrease." Shall we, who have complain'd of others, for injoining *Assent* and *Consent* to the *Writings* of fallible Men, and for requiring *Subscriptions* to doubtful *Articles* or *Canons*, under severe Penalties, now

* *Chillingworth*. Safe Religion of Protestants Chap. iv. §. 3.

do the same ourselves? With what Face can such as have formerly commended Mr. Fox, the *Martyrologist*, for refusing to *subscribe* any thing but his *Greek Testament*, now be accessory to the censuring, or silencing those, who are ready to subscribe any *Declarations* fram'd in *express Words* of Scripture; because they refuse to assent to our *Interpretations*, or *Inferences*, which they are persuaded in their Consciences are false, dubious, or unintelligible?

As for such as would palm upon us the Opinions of Men for the Oracles of God; Subjection to fellow Christians for Obedience to Christ; human Writings for the Gospel of our Saviour; barefac'd or disguis'd *Popery* for *Protestant Orthodoxy*, let us have no Fellowship with them in these unchristian Methods. Let us leave it to *Papists* to set up *Courts of Inquisition*, and to make *Racks* to torment the Bodies and Consciences of Men; and not, by our uncharitable Censures, and arbitrary Impositions, justify their *Cruelty* and *Persecution*. If we take away the good Name, and Livelihood of those whom we call Hereticks, they will take it for granted that they may take away our Lives. If we excommunicate, and silence such as differ from us; why may not they torment and burn us, who differ as much from them, when their *Authority* is back'd with a Claim of *Infallibility*? If we pretend that we bear no Ill-will to the Persons of those we use ill; that we make use of *gentle Methods* (as we call them, because we do not feel the Smart of them) to reclaim our Bre-

thren from their Errors, out of Zeal for the Glory of God, and out of *pure Love* to Men's Souls: how many *bloody Popish Persecutors* have us'd the same Pleas? And can we imagine that these Pretences will bear us out at the Bar of Christ? 'Tis no new thing for the *Devil's Work* to be done in *God's Livery*; and for Christ's faithful Servants to suffer by *conscientious Persecutors*. Christ tells his Disciples, that *they who should kill them would think they did God Service*. John xvi. 2. St. Paul was zealous when he persecuted the Christians even unto Death. Act. xxii. 4. And conscientious, when he verily thought that he ought to do many things against Jesus of Nazareth. Act. xxvi. 9.

V. I SHALL conclude with some *Advice* to such as suffer by *Rash* and *uncharitable Judging*.

1. REFLECT upon the Time past, when perhaps you were too *censorious* your selves; as zealous for imposing your Opinions upon others, as others are now for imposing their's upon you. Let this induce you to bear with your Brethren in this their Infirmary: they think they do God Service, as you thought formerly, when you did the same.

2. WHEN you are reproach'd and censur'd, do not render railing for railing. 1 Pet. iii. 9. Are you defam'd, and unjustly condemn'd? Do not hate and despise your unjust Judges. *When you are revil'd, revile not again*; lest while you endeavour to heal a Wound in your Name, you make a deeper, and more dangerous one in your Conscience.

preach'd at EXON. 43

3. WHEN others judge your Hearts, do you search them. Do good Men, your Friends, Men of Piety and Eminency, *cast out your Name as evil?* Luke vi. 22. *Commit your Cause to him that judgeth righteously.* 1 Pet. ii. 23. Maintain a holy Jealousy over your selves. *Be not high minded, but fear.* If you can appeal to God for your Innocency, as to that of which you are accus'd ; or if you are condemn'd for your Duty, yet consider whether you have not by some former Sin provok'd God to exercise you with this fore Trial.

IF you do not find Cause to condemn your selves for what is past, however be cautious for the time to come. *Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall.* 1. Cor. x. 12. When you are condemn'd for what you are persuaded is your Duty, account it a *small thing to be judged of Man's Judgment.* 1 Cor. iv. 3. Use prudent means to clear your Reputation: cut off Occasions from such as seek them. Defeat the Envy and Malice of your Enemies, and turn it to your Advantage by being more strict and circumspect.

4. CONCLUDE that God is trying your Patience, Meekness, and Charity : *That when you are judged, you are chastened of the Lord.* 1 Cor. xi. 32. Bear Reproach and Contempt with Patience. Spread the Accusations of your Brethren before your heavenly Father ; and *pray for them that despitefully use you*, that they may find Mercy of God, tho' they shew little or none to you. When such as fear God pass unjust Sentences upon you,
let

let not this alter your Opinion of them, or diminish your Affection to them. Remember that the very best are imperfect. And they may have a Zeal for God, who are defective in Knowledge, and Charity. *Elias* was subject to Passion, and *Jonah* to Peevishness: *Job* had Fies of Impatience, and too many in the Primitive Times were selfish. *Phil. ii. 21.* Yea Christ's own Disciples knew not what Spirit they were of, when they call'd for Fire from Heaven. Do good Men conspire to stain your Reputation, be doubly careful to keep your Conscience clear, and to live so as that none may believe them. A meek, humble Carriage is the most effectual Method to shame them out of their Uncharitableness. If the Censures of good Men make you more patient, and humble, and watchful, you will have cause to bless God when the Reproaches of his Servants fall upon you.

5. LONG for Heaven, where you, and your censorious Brethren, who love the Lord Jesus in Sincerity, shall have a joyful Meeting, be perfectly reconcil'd, and be of one Mind, and of one Heart: where the Children of the Kingdom shall be freed from Prejudice and Passion: where perfect Light shall remove all Difference of Judgment, and perfect Love shall heal all Frowardness and Disaffection: where they shall live in Unity and Peace, blessing and praising God, and saying, *Rev. v. 13.* Blessing, Honour, Glory, and Power, be unto him that sitteth on the Throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.

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